

Hiring and Training Strategies

January 2006

INTRODUCTION

During the Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 budget process, the Commission directed the staff to provide an implementation plan with major milestones that concisely describes how the staff intends to identify, hire, and train new staff with the necessary talent and expertise and provide the infrastructure, including adequate office space, that will be needed to support the review of multiple applications. The largest increase in new staff will be in the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR). However, this growth for new reactor licensing activities has large impacts on several other offices. The Office of Human Resources (OHR), the Office of Administration (ADM), the Office of the General Counsel (OGC), the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research (RES), the Office of Nuclear Security and Incident Response (NSIR), and the Office of Information Services (OIS) have vital roles in the success of new reactor licensing. This enclosure describes how the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff is working cooperatively to hire, train, and support new employees.

IDENTIFYING NECESSARY TALENT AND EXPERTISE

NRR has identified, for FY 2006, the positions and expertise needed for near-term activities and is working to identify the positions and expertise needed to meet the projected workload demands for new reactor licensing activities in FY 2007 and beyond. To address these staffing and hiring challenges and ensure continuous progress on staffing challenges, NRR managers and the Human Resources Services and Operations (HRSO) team leader, servicing NRR, meet twice per month in two office-level meetings: a monthly Human Capital meeting and a Hiring and Recruitment meeting. For example, management decided in the monthly Human Capital meeting to expand the upcoming class size from 14 to 28 participants for the NRR Nuclear Safety Professional Development Program (NSPDP). Additionally, the recently established New Reactor Infrastructure Planning Branch (NRPB) is performing an assessment of the new reactor licensing activities and the areas of expertise that are needed to meet the increased demand. The impact of the NRR staffing increases will be reflected in the budget adjustment proposals for FY 2007 and FY 2008.

RECRUITMENT AND HIRING PROCESS

To meet the demands of hiring new employees and to address the need for more experienced individuals, the staff identified the need to expand its recruitment activities and streamline the NRR hiring process. As a long standing practice, NRR actively participates in OHR-sponsored recruitment of NSPDP at targeted universities with a history of graduating technically strong, diverse candidates. NRR expanded its recruitment activities at professional society conferences and career fairs, including the Federal Asian Pacific American Council, the Society of Women Engineers, the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, the American Indian Science and Engineering Society, and the National Society of Black Engineers. OHR is working with NRR to expand advertising in trade journals and on Web sites to attract

professionals in specialized technical disciplines and in local newspapers around the country where technical engineers and scientists may be interested in re-locating due to job cutbacks in their areas. NRR, in partnership with OHR, continues to evaluate job markets and professional conferences in various geographical locations to determine if advertising or recruitment activities would attract candidates with the skills and knowledge needed by the Agency. Since August 2005, OHR has made arrangements to conduct special recruiting events, including the Service Academy Career Conference in San Diego, an open house at Savannah River, and the POWER-GEN international trade show.

In addition to improving the hiring process, the HRSO group in OHR is evaluating and improving recruitment strategies to attract highlyqualified candidates to the Agency. The staff has revised the generic open vacancy announcement for mid-career engineers and scientists to provide additional flexibilities to offer relocation and recruitment incentives. Additionally, the staff has streamlined the request and approval process for a standard incentive (i.e., a cash incentive for a pre-determined percentage of the offered salary). In the improved process, a standard template was created for the request for approval of an incentive and a possible 2-week hold on requests for the bi-monthly meeting was eliminated. The NRC staff is also creating the policy of offering referral awards. The referral award provides employees with a monetary "thank you" if candidates they refer to the Agency are hired. Finally, the NRC staff has requested direct hire authority for the Agency from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for any critical need area, which will improve our ability to quickly extend good candidates a job offer.

NRR will experience the largest growth in the Agency due to the new reactor licensing activities. In response to the need to hire a large number of new engineers, scientists, and other support staff, NRR created a hiring team in late August 2005. The team consists of two recent senior executive service candidate development program graduates, one senior level system employee, the human capital initiative advisor, and a dedicated NRR human resources expert. This NRR hiring team analyzed the hiring process to identify areas to improve the timeliness of the hiring process. As a result, the process was streamlined to decrease the amount of time to (1) evaluate and identify qualified candidates for interviewing, (2) schedule the interviews, (3) perform the reference checks, (4) perform the interviews, and (5) extend an offer. These efficiencies were realized by (1) using a member of the hiring team to serve as the rating official, (2) performing an early screening during the initial rating to match the branches skill needs with the candidates' experience and education, (3) relying on designated human capital representatives for each division to act as the point of contact with the hiring team for coordinating the review of candidate application packages and making hiring decisions, and (4) using the NRR human resources expert to schedule the interviews, arrange travel, and perform the reference checks. These efficiencies have decreased the time between receiving eligible candidates from OHR and the NRC extending an offer. Additionally, by alleviating some of the hiring process activities from the supervisors and managers, such as performing the reference checks, the impact on their time has decreased. As of mid-January 2006, NRR has selected 84 employees in both technical and support areas. In order to accommodate the headquarters projected growth in staff, the staff is exploring various options to address the existing space shortage in the White Flint Complex. The status of the staff's actions were addressed in a January 20, 2006, memorandum to the Commission. Provided below is a table with activities in the hiring plan for NRR employees.

Hiring Plan for NRR employees				
	Task	Target Date	Status	Responsible group
1	Create an NRR Hiring Team to lead the Office in recruitment and hiring	Jul 2005	completed	NRR/ PMAS
2	Analyze and streamline the hiring process	Aug 2005	completed	NRR Hiring Team
3	Designate managers to be division human capital representatives to coordinate the review of candidates and make hiring decisions	Jul & Oct. (re-org) 2005	completed	NRR management
4	Approve overhires for projected knowledge and skill needs	Jul 2005	completed and as-needed	NRR management
5	Create a tracking system and charts for tracking candidates in the hiring process	Sep 2005	completed; updates are on-going	NRR/ PMAS
6	Review the existing recruitment locations and identify events and locations for additional recruitment events	Sep 2005	initial review completed; on-going	NRR/PMAS
7	Identify NRR-specific needs using the existing vacancy announcement	Oct 2005	completed	OHR/HRSO & NRR/PMAS
8	Identify opportunities and create advertisements for targeted advertising in local newspapers as well as national publications, trade journals, etc.	Sep 2005	initial completed, on-going as needed	OHR/HRSO & NRR/PMAS
9	Create a generic vacancy for reactor-related engineering and scientific fields	Dec 2005	completed, closes Feb 6 2006, then periodically	OHR/HRSO & NRR/PMAS
10	Solicit and encourage the current staff to recruit and provide potential candidate information and recruitment locations to the Team through Office Director's "Have I Got News for You" and through managers and supervisors.	Jul 2005	completed	NRR/PMAS with NRR Communications Advisor

Hiring Plan for NRR employees				
	Task	Target Date	Status	Responsible group
11	Allow for an increase the next class of NSPDPs	Oct 2005	completed	NRR human capital (HC) management representatives
12	Evaluate and improve recruitment and hiring strategies, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> revise the generic open vacancy announcement for mid-career engineers and scientists to provide additional flexibilities to offer relocation and recruitment incentives. streamline the request and approval process for a standard incentive (i.e., a cash incentive for a pre-determined percentage of the offered salary) create NRC policy for a referral award program request to OPM for direct hire authority 	Sep 2005 Sep 2005 draft - Sep 2005 final - Feb 2006 Jan 2006	completed completed completed in progress in progress	OHR/HRSO
13	Hold NRR monthly HC meetings to discuss staffing challenges	monthly	on-going	NRR HC management representatives & HRSO team leader
14	Hold NRR monthly hiring and recruitment meetings to discuss hiring issues and to supplement monthly HC meetings	monthly	on-going as needed	NRR HC management representatives & HRSO team leader

Finally, while NRR continues to focus on recruiting new staff as the principal vehicle for preparing for the challenges of the future, it also is utilizing other staffing options to bridge the gap while new employees are being brought on board. Most notably, dual compensation waivers or re-employed annuitants are being used when no other reasonable staffing option exists to accomplish mission critical tasks. Approximately ten individuals are currently being used for their unique or specialized skills in a variety of tasks such as development of a construction inspection program, inspection support, and safety culture, as well a significant

knowledge management/knowledge transfer activities such as completion of Standard Review Plan sections as well as mentoring and training of new staff.

TRAINING AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT/TRANSFER

The rapid integration and training of a large number of new employees into the Agency is a significant challenge but is essential for the Agency's and the employees' future success and productivity. To address this, the staff is utilizing and expanding the use of existing training tools, including mentoring, on-the-job-training, formal classroom and on-line training, and self-study activities. The training plan is provided below.

To assist new employees in their adjustment to the Agency, an "NRR New Employee Orientation and Training Guide" has been developed and is being implemented. This guide is designed to be a follow-on to the NRC New Employee Orientation to assist NRR employees in becoming familiar with the generic NRC employee processes and policies (e.g., ethics, Groupwise, Time & Labor) and regulatory processes and policies (e.g., allegations, licensing, risk assessment). The guide includes training courses, reading assignments and self-study activities. Additionally, new employees will be assigned a "docent" that will be a peer, typically from their branch, to assist the new employee in adjusting to the Agency. Additionally, position-specific training is expected to accompany the generic training in the "NRR New Employee Orientation and Training Guide." The staff is continuing to develop its qualification plans or other position-specific training. For example, the Division of Operating Reactor Licensing (DRL) has a qualification program for project engineers/managers.

Training the new employees will increase the need for courses held at the Technical Training Center (TTC) and Professional Development Center (PDC). The staff is beginning the process of job task analysis (JTA) and, based on the skill sets developed, the staff will examine pre-existing training to identify course work that either 1) provides the necessary training, 2) provides a degree of the necessary training and can be modified to meet a greater degree of the need(s) identified in the JTA, or 3) needs to be developed specifically to support the skill sets identified in the JTA. The staff is evaluating the best means to accomplish this activity, including using in-house staff, contracted staff, or a combination of these. The staff is also identifying the immediate needs for additional sessions of existing courses that will be in greater demand to support the training of new employees this year. Finally, when the PDC is moved to a new location, it will be equipped with training aids similar to the TTC. As a result, more courses can be offered at Headquarters. This will save on travel funds and time away from the office for participants.

Additionally, for succession planning and knowledge management in critical skills and knowledge areas, supervisors and managers have been provided a new tool. The staff created a new supervisor's tool in the Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP) system to assist in identifying skill gaps and managing succession planning and knowledge transfer. Using the skill categories and the needs assessment already existing in SWP, supervisors can view a Staff and Critical Skill Matrix. The Staff and Critical Skill Matrix is a table that displays the branch employee's level of expertise in each of the most critical skills identified by the branch chief. By identifying potential skill gaps, supervisors can make more informed decisions when assigning work, and can identify skill areas for individual employee development. Additionally, the staff revised the external training (training requested with Form 368) criteria to give priority

to areas that are identified skill gaps and have been identified by supervisors in SWP to be critical to fulfill our mission. Skill and knowledge areas that have been identified as a potential skill gap receive the highest priority (Priority 1) rating for external training.

Training Plan				
	Task	Target Date	Status	Responsible Group
1	Develop "NRR New Employee Orientation and Training Guide"	Dec 2005	completed	NRR/PMAS
2	Conduct a New Reactor Licensing Process seminar	Dec 2005	completed	NRR/DNRL
3	Identify training needs for new employees and to support new reactor licensing process	Feb 2006	on-going	OHR/HRTD & NRR/DNRL & NRR/PMAS
4	Assess existing training based on needs assessment	2 Qtr FY 2006		OHR/HRTD
5	Develop training or modify existing training	3 Qtr FY 2006		OHR/HRTD
6	Fill the administrative lead position for assisting new NRR employees, coordinating office seminars, and tracking the completion of new employee training	Feb 2006	solicitation issued	NRR/PMAS

INFRASTRUCTURE

The recent NRR reorganization was a major change in infrastructure. The reorganization was designed, in part, to prepare for and discharge the increase in the new reactor licensing workload and reduce a layer of executive management to allow an increase in the number of first-line supervisors. The organizational structure was created based on projected growth for FY 2006 and FY 2007 to prepare for the expected FY 2008 new reactor workload. The number of supervisory GG-15 positions was increased to achieve improved staff oversight at the first-line supervisory level.

As planning for new reactor licensing progresses, the staff is working to identify means to perform licensing activities more efficiently and effectively. For example, the staff identified the need for a better process for capturing e-mail records. The current process for identifying and capturing e-mail records is totally dependent upon staff actions. With the anticipated increase in the volume of e-mail records associated with new reactor license applications, the burden to identify and capture e-mail records could become quite resource intensive. OIS' systems development and records management staff are working with the NRR staff to identify NRR's requirements and explore options for capturing e-mail records using state-of-the-art software to determine the record value of e-mail messages and attachments and file them in their appropriate record keeping systems. The e-mail records management software will

preclude/minimize the need for staff involvement in determining the record value of e-mail and in moving identified records to their appropriate official repository, for example, the Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS), for retention in accordance with established records disposition authorities. This initiative will require establishing rules that will enable the software to catalog and file records in their appropriate repositories. It will greatly improve the integrity of the documentation for the NRR new reactor license case files and will greatly increase the number and percentage of e-mail records that are captured and preserved as official Agency records. This application will be piloted with the NRR new reactor license activities during the FY 2006/2007 time frame and later will be expanded as an enterprise-wide application.

SUMMARY

The NRC staff is working closely together to aggressively meet the demand required for the recruitment, hiring, training, and support of new engineers, scientists, and other support staff. Recruitment efforts have expanded to target experienced professionals, as well as expanding the NSPDP for next year. Additional recruitment incentives and hiring strategies are being pursued and offered. Efficiencies in the hiring process have been identified and are in place to decrease the time for the hiring process and the burden on the supervisors. The staff continues to assess the need for additional positions for engineers, scientists, and support staff necessary to support new reactor licensing activities. The NRC Orientation Training and "NRR New Employee Orientation and Training Guide" will assist employees in adjusting to Agency policies and procedures in a timely manner. A job task analysis is being conducted to assess the increased training needs for new employees. NRR is currently hiring staff to meet the projected full-time equivalent (FTE) for FY 2007: however, FY 2006 FTE utilization will not be exceeded. The impact of the NRR staffing increases will be reflected in the budget adjustments for FY 2007 and FY 2008. As of mid-January 2006, NRR has selected 84 employees in both technical and support areas. The staff is dedicated to working together to meet the challenge of recruiting, hiring, training and integrating new employees into the Agency with the necessary infrastructure to support our activities.